

OBERON CLASSICS

The
Hypochondriac

by Molière

in a new version by Richard Bean

THE HYPOCHONDRIAC



Molière

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In a new version by Richard Bean

from a literal translation by Chris Campbell

OBERON BOOKS
LONDON

WWW.OBERONBOOKS.COM

First published in this version in 2005 by Oberon Books Ltd

This electronic edition published in 2012 by Oberon Books Ltd
521 Caledonian Road, London N7 9RH
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7607 3637 / Fax: +44 (0) 20 7607 3629
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www.oberonbooks.com

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-84943-205-4

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Note

This version was commissioned by the Almeida Theatre London in 2004. It is not a direct translation, and I have cut the Prologue, Interludes, any ballet, and also provided my own Epilogue. So any students of Molière would be advised to look at the original or a faithful translation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chris Campbell, who not only provided the literal translation, but also much useful advice and encouragement. Also, I'd like to thank Lindsay Posner for his enthusiasm, help and support, and all the actors for their many useful contributions to the text for which I will take the credit or blame.

Richard Bean

Characters

ARGAN

TOINETTE

ANGELIQUE

BELINE

BONNEFOI

CLEANTE

DIAFOIRERHOEIA

THOMAS, his son

LOUISON

BERALDE

FLEURANT

PURGON

and Attendants, Doctors, Patients, Kings etc.

This version of *The Hypochondriac* was first performed at the Almeida Theatre, London on 10 November 2005, with the following cast:

ARGAN, Henry Goodman

TOINETTE, Lyndsey Marshal

ANGELIQUE, Carey Mulligan

BELINE, Ronni Ancona

BONNEFOI, Gyuri Sarossy

CLEANTE, Kris Marshall

DIAFOIRERHOEA, David Killick

THOMAS, John Marquez

LOUISON, Daniella Wilson / Amy Lucas

BERALDE, Stephen Boxer

FLEURANT, Steven Beard

PURGON, Simon Gregor

Directed by Lindsay Posner

Designed by Giles Cadle

Lighting by Jean Kalman

Music by Matthew Scott

Sound by John Leonard

Movement by Scarlett Mackmin

Casting by Maggie Lunn

Literal translation by Chris Campbell

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Act One

ARGAN's study in his house in Paris. ARGAN is sitting in a combination wheelchair / commode. It has a table surface attached so that he can get on with his 'work' without getting up. It is obvious that he spends all day every day in it. In the pockets and recesses of the chair are secreted books on medicine, pills, potions, handkerchiefs etc. ARGAN is going through receipts and totalling the sums. When he gets a figure he writes it down.

ARGAN: Three francs plus two francs is five francs, and another five is ten, and another ten is twenty. Twenty francs?! What the hell...!?

He refers to the detail of the bill.

'Twenty-fourth of January, a penetrating, emollient exemplum to soften, moisten and enliven Monsieur's rectum.'

What I appreciate most about Doctor Purgon's invoices is the poetry.

'Anal vetting – thirty francs.'

Thirty francs for a quick once over?! Any other part of the body is twenty francs! What's he asking for? Danger money!? You're getting ten francs.

He writes that down.

If you fancy yourself as a poet Purgon you should be employing your words to celebrate love, not to fleece the terminally ill.

(Reading.) 'That same day, a cleansing clyster' – (huh! alliteration, that'll be an extra ten francs) – 'a cleansing clyster of wild Greek honey infused with roses designed to embellish and generally tidy up

Monsieur's fundament.' Thirty francs? Nope! Ten.

'The night of the twenty-fifth, a soporific, hepatic julep to assist Monsieur to sleep. Thirty-five cents.' Credit where credit is due. I went out like a light. I'll give you half.

He writes that down.

'Later on the twenty-fifth,' – (it was a full day I remember) – 'a bracing, purgative tonic composed of cayenne pepper, oriental senna' – (oriental? that'll be pricey) – 'and a gill of Monsieur Popineau's elixir – patent pending' – (oh a secret ingredient – ching! ching!) – 'to evacuate Monsieur's bile.' Five francs! Over my dead body! Three francs.

He writes it down.

'Twenty-sixth. Ten tablets of anti-flatulence clyster to excite the expulsion of Monsieur's painful wind. Ten francs.' Nope! Seven francs! Only seven of them worked.

He writes it down.

In fact I'm losing faith in Purgon. Today's enema doesn't seem to have worked either.

Looking between his legs.

Unless it was a quiet one. There might be something seriously wrong with me! Help! Toinette! I'm abandoned by my own servants!

He rings a handbell.

Toinette! They've all gone deaf!

He throws the handbell at the door.

Dinga linga ling! Dinga linga ling! I'm getting angry now. In this day and age, leaving a poor frail invalid dangerously stranded in his own home. Oh my God! They've left me here to die!

He stands and screams.

DINGA LINGA BLOODY LING!!!

Enter TOINETTE, slowly, ARGAN jumps back into his chair looking pathetic again.

TOINETTE: Here we go again.

ARGAN: What kept you?!

TOINETTE: This is me rushing.

ARGAN: *(With a hint of affection.)* Lazy cow!

TOINETTE: *(Suddenly holding her head.)* Ah! My head. I banged my head on the shutters, back there, when I was rushing!

ARGAN: You neglected me.

TOINETTE: Can you see blood? Ohhh!

ARGAN: A whole hour –

TOINETTE: – I might die, it could be a brain tumour, or –

ARGAN: – Shut it will you! Now listen to me.

TOINETTE: – Concussion, maybe a –

ARGAN: – Be quiet! And listen! This is a ticking off. Now –

INETTE: Oh! After what I've just done to myself – rushing, I –

RGAN: – I've lost my voice now!

INETTE: And I've cracked my head open, so shut up, we're square!

RGAN: Don't talk to me like that!

INETTE: I'll cry. Promise.

RGAN: Today's enema doesn't –

INETTE: – Oh!

RGAN: – Listen! You left me. Alone. In here when I'm –

INETTE: (*Moaning.*) – Ohh! Is the skin broken?

RGAN: Stop bloody interrupting me will you!

INETTE: Criticize me all you like. I don't think it matters any more.

RGAN: I'm trying incredibly hard to tear a couple of strips off you but you keep interrupting me you big –

INETTE: – Yes?

RGAN: – daft...

INETTE: – I'll cry.

RGAN: – lazy...fat...whore.

INETTE: Fat?

He gets up from his chair which is revealed as an emergency commode.

RGAN: What's in the pan?

MINETTE: Is this a game? I like games. A gold coin?

RGAN: Insolent tart! I don't think today's enema has worked. Is there anything in there?

MINETTE: I'm not poking my nose into Doctor Purgon's business.

RGAN: It is your job to take the pan away and empty it!

MINETTE: I've found a way of doing it without making eye contact.

RGAN: Just tell me what's in there!

MINETTE: (*She has a look.*) Nothing to write home about sir.

RGAN: Nothing 'substantial' then?

MINETTE: Quite a lot of number one.

RGAN: Damn! I knew it. That enema he gave me this morning hasn't worked. Take it away then.

MINETTE picks the bowl out of the chair. We see rather a lot of urine.

MINETTE: If I take it away now, empty it, and wash it out carefully, and diligently, as I normally do. How are you going to manage if the enema suddenly starts to work?

RGAN: It won't. I've lost faith in the man. Go on!

MINETTE leaves. ARGAN sits again and continues his accounts.

'Twenty-seventh. In order to hasten Monsieur to stool. A motivating, propellant enema, experimentally hand administered. Three francs.'

Payment in full. That one did work! Efficient, original and uniquely enjoyable. What more can we ask?

He writes it down.

‘In addition,’ – (huh! obviously they don’t do ‘subtraction’ at medical school) – ‘a heart-strengthening preventative prophylactic’ – (ah, ah, tautology, you’re not getting away with that!) – ‘made from four strands of fox hair, one syrop of lemon and pomegranate, and some of the poisonous bit of an artichoke. Fifteen francs!’ Whooooa! Steady on Doctor Purgon. Carry on like that and no-one will want to be ill ever again! You’re getting five francs and you’ll be grateful.

He writes it down.

So, this month I’ve had one, two, three, four, five, six, seven – eight consultations, and one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Twelve enemas. Last month I had twelve consultations and twenty-one enemas! That’s it then! That’s why I feel worse this month! He’s deliberately neglecting me!

Enter ANGELIQUE.

Angelique, I want to talk to you. (*Grips his stomach.*) Agh!

ANGELIQUE: Yes father?

RGAN: Ooo! Ah. Oooh! Hang on!

ANGELIQUE: What is it father?

RGAN: Toinette! The bowl! Quick! Agh! Give me my stick!

ANGELIQUE hands him his stick, which he grabs. He then runs out stage right. Enter TOINETTE stage left with clean bowl which she puts in the

commode.

DINETTE: Where is he?

NGELIQUE: He got caught short.

TOINETTE laughs.

(Looking lovelorn.) Toinette?

DINETTE: *(Not looking at her.)* Mmm?

NGELIQUE: Toinette!?

DINETTE: *(Not looking at her.)* What?

NGELIQUE: Look at me! Toinette!

DINETTE: What? What do you mean ‘Toinette’?

NGELIQUE: Do you know what I want to talk about?

DINETTE: Let me guess. On Sunday you told me that you’d met this boy Cleante. Monday you wanted to talk about Cleante; Tuesday you wanted to know why I thought Cleante had smiled at you. Wednesday – what did Cleante really mean when he said, ‘It’s very hot outdoors.’ Thursday – ‘Cleante is wearing a hat,’ do I think that’s significant? Today’s Friday. Er...Cleante?

NGELIQUE: If you know, why don’t you raise the subject first, instead of me having to work my way round to it?

DINETTE: I can’t usually get a word in edgeways.

NGELIQUE: Do you disapprove of my feelings for him?

INETTE: No.

GELIQUE: Am I wrong to be obsessed with him?

INETTE: Nope.

GELIQUE: I could make it look like I don't care about him?

INETTE: Huh.

GELIQUE: Agh! Talk to me about him! Say something! Have an opinion! Don't you think there's an element of fate, of destiny, in the unusual way in which we met.

INETTE: Yeah.

GELIQUE: At the fair, why would he spring to my defence like that without even knowing who I was? That must mean that he has some feelings for me?

INETTE: Yeah.

GELIQUE: Don't you think that was one of the noblest things you've ever heard of?

INETTE: Yup.

GELIQUE: That brute could have punched him. Oh Toinette! Come on! He's gorgeous isn't he?

INETTE: Yeah.

GELIQUE: And funny. Oh, he's so funny! Isn't he?

INETTE: Yes.

ANGELIQUE: And what he said to me –

WINNETTE: – on Wednesday?

ANGELIQUE: Yes! Have you ever heard anything more romantic?

WINNETTE: No.

ANGELIQUE: But Toinette, what do I do?! I'm stuck here, and I have to obey my father.

WINNETTE: Yup.

ANGELIQUE: You know what Cleante has said to me. Do you think he's telling the truth?

WINNETTE: He's a man.

ANGELIQUE: Oh, if he's lying I'll never believe another man in my life!

WINNETTE: You'll have learnt an important lesson then.

Enter ARGAN.

Anybody injured?

ARGAN: Watch it you. Angelique! I've had an approach. This may come as a shock. Someone wants to marry you.

ANGELIQUE: Oh!

ARGAN: It's a good thing, generally, marriage. Women like it. It seems to come naturally to them. Is that alright with you then? Getting married?

ANGELIQUE: It is my duty, my obligation as a daughter, to please my father.

RGAN: Good. That's a relief. I've already said yes, you see.

NGELIQUE: What pleases you pleases me.

RGAN: Your step-mother wanted to send you and your sister off to a nunnery. She's been on about that for a while.

DINETTE: I wonder why sir?

RGAN: Eh? She didn't want me to agree to the marriage, but I got my own way. For once, huh!

NGELIQUE: Thank you father! You're so good to me.

RGAN: Yes, I am aren't I.

DINETTE: It's the wisest thing you've ever done.

RGAN: One little proviso – I've never met the boy.

NGELIQUE: Oh you'll be pleased father.

RGAN: What? You've met him?

NGELIQUE: Six days ago, at the fair, he rescued me from a man who was pestering me. We're in...there is a strong mutual attraction.

RGAN: Good, I hear he's a well built lad.

NGELIQUE: Yes.

RGAN: With a pleasant manner.

NGELIQUE: Very pleasant.

RGAN: Good looking with it.

NGELIQUE: Very good looking.

RGAN: Intelligent, apparently, and from a good family?

NGELIQUE: Absolutely.

RGAN: It'll be good to have someone in the family who speaks fluent Greek.

TOINETTE and ANGELIQUE swap glances.

NGELIQUE: Does he?

RGAN: Course he does. In three days time he's going to qualify as a doctor.

NGELIQUE: Who told you that?

RGAN: Doctor Purgon. He's Doctor Purgon's nephew.

NGELIQUE: Cleante is not Doctor Purgon's nephew.

RGAN: Who the hell is Cleante? You're marrying Thomas Diafoirerhoea, Doctor Purgon's nephew, the son of his brother-in-law, Doctor Diafoirerhoea, who is also a doctor, naturally. They're all doctors.

NGELIQUE: We've been talking about a different person then.

ANGELIQUE runs off into a corner and cries.

INETTE: You're a very rich man, you've no need to marry your daughter off to a mere doctor.

RGAN: What the bloody hell's it got to do with you, you nosy cow?

INETTE: Oh yeah, swearing's gonna help! Let's talk about this calmly. What is the reason for this marriage?

RGAN: It would be good for me to have a son-in-law, and relatives who are doctors. I'm extremely ill and it would be useful to have immediate access to consultations and remedies from within the family. Be a lot cheaper too.

INETTE: At least you're honest. But, are you really ill?

RGAN: (*Forcefully.*) Am I ill? It's a miracle I'm still alive! You stupid bitch!

INETTE: Alright, alright! Actually, I think you're sicker than you think you are.

RGAN: Do you? God, I think you might be right.

INETTE: But your daughter is not ill, and so there's no need for her to marry a doctor.

RGAN: She's going to marry a doctor for ME. A daughter who truly loves her father would do anything to improve his health.

INETTE: Don't even think about this marriage.

RGAN: Why not?

INETTE: Your daughter will not consent to it. She doesn't want to have anything to do with Thomas Diafoirerhoea, his father, or any of the Doctor Diafoirerhoeas.

RGAN: I want to have a lot to do with them. Anyhow, it's a damn good match in more ways than one. Thomas Diafoirerhoea will inherit

everything, he's the only son, AND, Doctor Purgon has neither wife nor children so will give this Thomas character everything, EVERYTHING, the moment he marries! And Doctor Purgon has got eight thousand francs in the bank, most of which was mine at one time, before I got ill.

INETTE: She won't marry him, she wasn't made to be Mrs Diafoirerhoea.

RGAN: I am her father.

INETTE: Oh don't be like that.

RGAN: It is my wish. I've given my word already.

INETTE: She won't do it.

RGAN: I'll put her in a convent then.

INETTE: You wouldn't.

RGAN: I would!

INETTE: You couldn't!

RGAN: I could! Who's going to stop me?

INETTE: Yourself.

RGAN: Me?

INETTE: You wouldn't have the heart. You'd be overcome with paternal tenderness.

RGAN: No I would not!

INETTE: A bit of 'oh my darling daddy please'.

RGAN: It wouldn't work, not with me.

MINETTE: The first little tear and you'd give in.

RGAN: I wouldn't budge an inch!

MINETTE: You know you would! You're a bit of a softie really!

RGAN: (*Standing, grabbing his stick.*) How dare you call me 'a bit of a softie'!? I am actually a complete and utter bastard as a father!

MINETTE: Don't forget you're ill.

RGAN: I categorically order her to prepare for the marriage!

MINETTE: And I categorically forbid you to order her to do something she doesn't want to do!

RGAN: What?! A tart of a servant?! Ordering her master about!? This is the end!

MINETTE: When the master is obviously deluded it is the servant's duty to save him.

RGAN: (*Now chasing TOINETTE with the stick.*) You insolent bitch! I've been looking forward to this.

MINETTE: It's my job not to let you make a fool of yourself.

RGAN: Cow!

MINETTE: I will do everything in my power to stop her marrying this Thomas Diafoirerhoea.

RGAN: Scheming hermaphrodite!

MINETTE: She's more inclined to obey me on this one than you.

RGAN: Angelique! Don't just stand there! Grab hold of her!

ANGELIQUE: Father, don't get so excited.

RGAN: Agh! What was that? Oh my God, my heart missed a beat.

He sits, holding his chest.

I'm tightening up. Don't leave me like this. Agh! It's my heart! I've definitely got heart trouble.

MINETTE: The only trouble with your heart is that it's not big enough.

TOINETTE and ANGELIQUE leave.

RGAN: Oh my God! Darling!! Beline!! Help!!

Enter BELINE.

ELINE: What's the matter poppet?

RGAN: They're making me angry! My heart skipped a beat.

ELINE: Oh baby, you poor thing.

RGAN: That Toinette, she's vicious, she's driving me mad.

ELINE: I'm here now.

RGAN: She's spent the last hour ridiculing me, my life, and everything I've ever stood for. She even said I'm not really ill. Ha!

ELINE: Really?

RGAN: My dear darling wife, what would I do without you?

ELINE: There, there, there.

ARGAN feels her bottom. She clips him.

Naughty boy! You know you're not supposed to –

RGAN: – But darling –

ELINE: – Doctor Purgon told me your bad humours will bubble to the top if you get aroused.

RGAN: (*Touching her again.*) He never told me that.

ELINE: Stop it! He specifically said you're not allowed anything, in that department. You can touch but you can't feel.

RGAN: What's the difference?

ELINE: Everything.

RGAN: But I need a son and heir?

ELINE: Purgon told me that intense physical activity combined with extreme emotion could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Doing it would kill you.

RGAN: Damn!

ELINE: Now tell me, what's this about Toinette?

RGAN: That woman'll be the death of me.

BELINE crosses her fingers behind his back in a 'let's hope so' gesture.

ELINE: Don't exaggerate darling.

RGAN: You know all that vile foul smelling bile I cough up nowadays. That's her.

ELINE: Oh didums.

RGAN: I've asked you to sack her.

ELINE: Oh come on sugar. She's clever, resourceful, careful, honest and most of all loyal, and nowadays that's a rare quality.

(Fiercely.) TOINETTE!!!

Enter TOINETTE.

I understand you've been abusing my husband?!

TOINETTE: Madam! Me, abuse your husband?! The seven seas would run dry before I would allow him to suffer a moment's discomfort at my hand.

RGAN: Snake!

TOINETTE: He wants to marry Angelique to a doctor. I said I thought that that was a very good idea. But that he'd be better off sending her to a nunnery.

ELINE: *(To ARGAN.)* You see, that's good advice.

RGAN: She's scheming!

ELINE: Are we going to calm down, or does mommy have to make you

calm down?

She starts arranging pillows around ARGAN.

Listen Toinette, you want to watch your step. I'll have you thrown out. Get some more pillows, and his coat. Come on this is your job!

(To ARGAN, pulling him about.) Keep your bonnet right down. Pneumonia starts when you get air in your ears.

ARGAN: Oh darling, thank you. At least I can rely on you.

ELINE: *(Arranging pillows.)* Lift up. One behind your back, and one for your little head.

TOINETTE shoves a pillow over his head and makes to suffocate him.

TOINETTE: And this one to save you from the damp!

TOINETTE leaves.

ARGAN: Did you see that!? She tried to kill me!

ELINE: No, no, no.

ARGAN: You do not have the faintest idea how astonishingly wicked that woman can be. I'm very frail!

ELINE: There, there, my little one.

ARGAN: You know darling, you're my only real comfort in this life.

ELINE: Oh my poor little boy!

ARGAN: To try to thank you for all your love and dedication, as I've said, I'd like to make a will.

ELINE: Oh no! Darling, please! Don't talk about such horrible things!

RGAN: With my health as it is, one has to be pragmatic about money.

ELINE: But when you love someone money's the last thing one thinks about. The very word. Money! Ugh!

RGAN: I know this is difficult for you but I asked you to talk to your legal advisor friend. Did you remember to do that?

ELINE: He's in the lobby.

RGAN: Oh? Excellent! Bring him in.

ELINE: Monsieur Bonnefoi! You can come in now!

Enter BONNEFOI.

RGAN: Forgive me, I can't get up, I'm rather weak. My wife tells me that you are an honest man and a close friend?

BONNEFOI: I first had the pleasure of providing a service to her last spring, and since then we have been firm friends.

RGAN: Good. Have you given her any good advice about my will?

ELINE: (*Swooning.*) Agh! I can't bring myself to think about it.

BONNEFOI: I've looked into it and I must advise you that you cannot, according to the law, leave your wife anything in your will.

RGAN: That's crazy.

BONNEFOI: Yes, it is, but it is also the law of France. The only thing you

can do is bestow a gift whilst both parties are still alive. Additionally, there should be no dependent children of the marriage on the death of either party.

RGAN: What?! I can't leave anything at all to this woman who has selflessly and faithfully cared for me through thick and thin. I think I'd better talk to my own lawyer.

NNNEFOI: Lawyers tend to lack imagination when it comes to the law. Lawyers take the law at face value. Now, there are other people you can talk to who are a bit more flexible in these matters, and who are adept at finding ways round the law, shall we say.

RGAN: Who are they?

NNNEFOI: Solicitors.

RGAN: And you're a –

NNNEFOI: – solicitor.

RGAN: Well, that makes everything easier! My wife was right when she described you as a brilliant and thoroughly honest man. So, let's not beat around the bush, how do I go about leaving all my wealth to my wife and keep it from my daughters.

NNNEFOI: One thing that you can do is get your wife to choose a reliable, trusted male friend –

RGAN: – a male friend of hers?

NNNEFOI: Yes, a trusted male friend of hers, and then you leave everything in the will to him.

RGAN: I don't see how that works.

DNNEFOI: The friend gives all the money back to your wife.

RGAN: When?

DNNEFOI: When you die.

RGAN: Oh I see!

ELINE: Agh! This talk of death, and dying, wills and MONEY. I can't bear it!

BELINE starts crying.

RGAN: Darling! Please, calm yourself. You're making things worse.

ELINE: But imagine – LIFE – without you! The thought! Ugh! I can't breathe!

DNNEFOI: Naturally, you can give your wife any number of gifts whilst you're still alive.

ELINE: I want nothing! If anything happens to you my darling, I don't think I could bear to live another day. Look! I'm shaking.

RGAN: Beline! Precious! It's upsetting enough this business. You're breaking my heart!

DNNEFOI: Your tears are premature, Beline.

ELINE: Monsieur Bonnefoi, I cannot begin to describe the love I feel for this poor sick man. He's not only a dear loving husband, he's also my best friend. To lose him...ugh!...to wake up without...ugh!...oh no...I think I'm going to faint!

DNNEFOI: Sit!

RGAN: Enough! Let's make out the will as Monsieur Bonnefoi advises but, to be on the safe side, how about if I give you twenty thousand francs in gold immediately, and, also I've got two quite substantial bearer bonds which I could sign over to you. What do you think?

ELINE: I don't want anything to do with any of this horrid business! How much gold?

RGAN: Twenty thousand.

ELINE: Ughagh! Do we really have to talk about this, I get so upset! What are the bonds worth?

RGAN: The two together, ten thousand francs.

ELINE: Ughagh!! All the money in the world could not compensate for the loss of your love.

BONNEFOI: Shall we do the will now?

RGAN: Why not?! Strike while the iron's hot, eh! Let's go to my study.

ELINE: Let me push you, my darling. It's the least I can do.

ARGAN, BONNEFOI and BELINE exit. In the wings TOINETTE and ANGELIQUE linger.

INETTE: That's her solicitor. They're talking about wills. Your step-mother isn't wasting any time is she? Whatever it is they're up to, I have no doubt it has to be against your best interests. I've never liked her.

ANGELIQUE: Why don't *you* like her?

INETTE: I don't like her for the same reason I don't keep a bucket of sick in the corner of my room.

NGELIQUE: I don't care if he gives her all his money, as long as he doesn't give away my heart. Oh Toinette, I am lost! I am in a hopeless position. What can we do?

INETTE: I've got a plan. But we need him to listen to someone. Who does he respect?

NGELIQUE: Er...well...no-one...my godfather, his brother. He might listen to him.

INETTE: Yes! Beralde. I'll get a message to him. It may begin to look as if I'm in agreement with your father and step-mother, but I want you to know that my loyalty to you is total.

NGELIQUE: Can I trust you?

INETTE: You're going to have to, I'm all you've got.

They hug.

End of Act One.

Act Two

TOINETTE is cleaning. Enter CLEANTE.

LEANTE: Madame?

DINETTE: You must be Cleante.

LEANTE: Why yes? That's incredible. We've never met.

DINETTE: I know more about you than I do about Louis the Fourteenth.

LEANTE: Oh.

DINETTE: It's not been easy. At least I'm interested in Louis the Fourteenth.

LEANTE: I'm sorry. I wanted to talk to –

DINETTE: – Can you imagine being King of France at five years old?

LEANTE: – Is Angelique? –

DINETTE: – Thirty years, all of my life, he's been king, and what a transformation he's made to France.

LEANTE: – Is she? –

DINETTE: – A navy that is the envy of the world, an army which is feared throughout Europe –

LEANTE: I need to talk –

DINETTE: – He's put the Dutch in their place – Holland.

JEANTE: – I thought I’d –

INETTE: – And who could imagine that we could have an alliance with of all people, the English!?

JEANTE: Yes, it’s incredible. I wanted –

INETTE: – But it’s not just the pride of France on the battlefield which has been restored, the man is the essence of Frenchness, he cares about the arts, about our heritage, our culture. He fights for France.

JEANTE: – Yes, he’s built some beautiful palaces, is Angelique –

INETTE: – It’s not just the palaces. I believe that he understands that art and culture is not the buildings, not the stones and mortar, but what happens in those buildings. A theatrical performance might seem fleeting, but it can be as much a celebration of the age, of his reign, as the palace at Versailles. Any old ‘king’ can build up his army, remodel his navy, but it is Louis who has restored the pride of France and made this country the home of God on earth. That’s what makes him the Sun King.

They both bow to Louis in the audience.

She’s not here. Piss off.

JEANTE: But I need to find out what is in her heart! And whether she intends to marry this doctor.

INETTE: She’s betrothed. She can’t just talk to anyone.

JEANTE: I guessed as much, so today I thought I’d be her music teacher’s friend.

INETTE: Foolproof. Not that it needs to be. Watch out! Here’s the fool,

her father! Get out the way, I'll soften him up for you.

CLEANTE backs off. Enter ARGAN, pacing and counting.

ARGAN: Doctor Purgon says I should walk up and down in my bedroom each morning twelve times one way and twelve times back. I don't know whether he means lengthways or widthways. I forgot to ask him. It's probably incredibly important.

JOINETTE: (*Brusque.*) You've got a visitor.

ARGAN: 'You've got a visitor.' That's not what I pay you for! 'Please sir, a visitor awaits.' You've forgotten you're a nursemaid – nurse AND maid.

JOINETTE: I failed my maid exams. That's why I'm cheap. Which is the main reason I'm here. You pay peanuts, you get monkeys.

Monkey noises.

JOINETTE starts tickling him.

ARGAN: Stop it! You're not to get me excited today. My bile is black.

JOINETTE: Black? Aaagh! Not black bile!?

ARGAN: Yes, I know.

JOINETTE: (*Spoken through gurgles, as in The Exorcist.*) My bile is black! Black is my bile!

ARGAN: (*Banging his stick on the floor.*) Be quiet!!! Show my visitor in.

JOINETTE walks off like Quasimodo gurgling.

JOINETTE: Black, black, black. GURGLE GURGLE.

TOINETTE gestures to CLEANTE to come in. He comes in.

(Introducing CLEANTE but just gurgling.) GURGLE GURGLE.

RGAN: Stop it! You fucking scheming lesbian!

LEANTE: Good day, sir. I'm sorry to hear about your bile. I hope you get better soon.

INETTE: Better? He doesn't want to get better. Worse. That's the word you're looking for. I hope you get 'worse' soon.

RGAN: She jokes young man. But since you ask, I am actually much worse today.

INETTE: He eats, drinks, sleeps, dances, argues, complains, moans, schemes, like everybody else, but that doesn't mean that he isn't also critically ill.

RGAN: I try and carry on as normal.

LEANTE: I'm here on behalf of your daughter's music teacher. He's had to go to the country, for the tobacco harvest, and he's sent me instead, in the meantime, for a tutorial, so that your daughter doesn't forget whatever she's learnt from him.

RGAN: Get on with it then.

INETTE: I'll take him to her room shall I?

RGAN: No. She can come out here.

INETTE: He won't be able to give her a proper tutorial unless they're alone.

RGAN: Nonsense. Do it in here, young man. I love music. Look, there she is. Angelique!

Enter ANGELIQUE.

This young man has been sent by your music teacher to give you you a tutorial.

ANGELIQUE: (*Genuinely surprised and love-struck.*) Oh my God!

RGAN: Your music teacher has gone to the country to help with the walnut harvest.

INETTE: (*To CLEANTE.*) Tobacco?

LEANTE: Tobacco.

RGAN: It's a little early to be harvesting tobacco, isn't it?

CLEANTE is struggling.

INETTE: They pick it green nowadays.

(*To CLEANTE.*) You're on your own.

TOINETTE leaves.

RGAN: (*To ANGELIQUE.*) What's the matter?

ANGELIQUE: (*Hopelessy in love.*) I had a dream last night. I was in great need, in a bit of a tight spot, with an ache, without hope, and someone, a young man, who looks exactly like this young man, took that pain away.

LEANTE: (*Certifiably nuts with lust.*) I am honoured to be someone who might occupy your thoughts, whether waking or dreaming, and I can

assure you, Mademoiselle, that if ever there is a time when I can be of service, whether in reality or fantasy, to be the man to rescue you from such a tight spot, or indeed, any situation of pressing need, then I will carry out my duty to relieve your pain, and will consider it the very reason why God chose to put me on this earth.

Enter TOINETTE.

TOINETTE: (*Laughing.*) I've just met your future son-in-law. What a lovely boy! I take it all back, sir. What a wit! And very handsome too.

(*To ANGELIQUE.*) You'll be thrilled to spend the rest of your life with him.

CLEANTE makes to leave.

RGAN: There's no need to go young man. I'm marrying my daughter off to a doctor, well, he qualifies in a couple of days time and then they'll get married. They've never met before. This is a moment to celebrate.

LEANTE: But, I wouldn't want to intrude.

RGAN: Stay!

TOINETTE: Shall I bring them in?

RGAN: Yes, of course!

TOINETTE leaves.

(*To CLEANTE.*) The wedding's on Monday, it's all arranged, you must invite that music teacher friend of yours, if he's back. The more the merrier.

LEANTE: Thank you sir, but —

ARGAN: – And you must come, of course. It's a wonderful thing, marriage, for a young girl.

Enter TOINETTE, followed by DIAFOIRERHOEA and THOMAS. DIAFOIRERHOEA takes off his hat.

TOINETTE: Monsieur Diafoirerhoea, and his son, Thomas Diafoirerhoea.

ARGAN puts a hand to his bonnet but doesn't take it off.

ARGAN: Sir, welcome. Forgive me, but Dr Purgon has forbidden me from removing my bonnet indoors, for medical reasons. But why am I saying this! You're in the profession, you know the consequences!

DIAFOIRERHOEA kneels before ARGAN.

AFOIRERHOEA: Indeed! Sir, it is our duty as doctors to bring succour, not sickness. Proper manners and the obligations of social behaviour should always be ignored when they are, as they are in your case, life-threatening. It is a great honour to visit you in your home.

ARGAN: No sir, the honour is mine, in having such an esteemed medical practitioner as yourself visit me in my home.

AFOIRERHOEA: When my brother-in-law first mooted the possibility of an alliance between our two families every hair on my body stood erect with the anticipation of joyful duty. I supplicate myself before you as an expression of my humble satisfaction that finally I have achieved a lifelong calling to serve so great a man as you.

ARGAN: Au contraire! It is I who should be kneeling before the knowledge and dedication of a gentleman, teacher, scholar, and –

TOINETTE: *(To ARGAN, helping him.)* – author.

ARGAN: Author?

AFOIRERHOE: You read my treatise on the spleen?

ARGAN: I couldn't put it down.

AFOIRERHOE: Stop! I cannot allow the promotion of my modest family name ahead of the name of France's, no! the world's, greatest upholsterer.

*DIAFOIRERHOE stands. They shake hands, and kiss.
DIAFOIRERHOE pushes THOMAS to the fore.*

Come! Thomas! Pay your respects.

THOMAS: (*Pointing at ARGAN.*) I'll start with him, yeah?

AFOIRERHOE: Yes.

THOMAS: (*Rote learned.*) Most noble sir I am here to salute acknowledge cherish and honour you as a second father and as a second father – you – it must be true to say that I am more indebted to you than to my first father – him – because although my first father is my natural father, you, my second father you have chosen me and in so doing the second father, you, have favoured me with your brain and not just your loins and as it is generally considered that the mind is superior to the body in all matters then quid pro quo I will value our future bond – that's me and you – more precious than the prior trifling bond of blood – with him – which came about only through copulation, and I am here today to offer up to...you! my very humble, respectful and total surrender, as might a worm to an eagle.

MINETTE: Education! Education! Education!

THOMAS: (*To DIAFOIRERHOE.*) I think that went quite well.

AFOIRERHOEA: (*To THOMAS.*) Optimum.

RGAN: Angelique?

ANGELIQUE steps tentatively forward. Then silence.

IOMAS: (*To DIAFOIRERHOEA.*) What's happening? Should I give her a kiss?

AFOIRERHOEA: Yes, go ahead.

IOMAS: (*Rote learned.*) Madam of all the titles due respect on God's earth whether it be King, Lord, Duke, Marquis, Bishop, Emperor, Chief, Sovereign, Baron, Suzerain, Potentate, First Lord of the Sea – all must fall to their knees before the legend 'mother-in-law' –

RGAN: – that's not my wife, that's my daughter!

IOMAS: Where is she then?

RGAN: She's on her way.

IOMAS: Alright then, it can wait.

Silence. THOMAS looks vacantly at the floor.

AFOIRERHOEA: Why don't you introduce yourself to Mademoiselle.

IOMAS: Righteo.

(*Rote learned.*) Mademoiselle just as the statue of Memnon elicited music when enlivened by the rays of the sun and as the petals of the heliotrope always turn towards the star of the day so from now on will my heart always turn towards your adorable eyes like a magnet stuck on North. This same heart of mine I offer to you to hang on the altar of your

charms forever, to be always obedient, always ready, but most of all, for every second of the rest of your life, whether waking or sleeping, I will be always there, just behind you.

INETTE: What a lovely thought!

RGAN: Well said!

LEANTE: (*To TOINETTE.*) Imagine his bedside manner.

INETTE: I'm never going to be ill again.

RGAN: (*To DIAFOIRERHOEA.*) What a wonderful boy! You must count yourself very lucky sir?

AFOIRERHOEA: I'm his father, so it's difficult for me to be objective, but I've never met anyone who had a wrong word to say about him. He's never had much in the way of imagination, being more at the 'solid' end of the scale, and I believe passionately that in doctoring that's a definite plus. As a child he was never what you'd call 'bright' with all the difficulties that that can bring, you know, questioning authority, playing childish games, noise. No, he spent his time as a child sitting in a corner, on his own, quietly rocking. We had all the trouble in the world trying to teach him to read, and he was nine before he even knew the alphabet, and I was very pleased about that because I'm a great believer in that old adage 'trees which grow slowly bear the best fruit'. And, because I always wanted him to become a doctor, I could see that his natural lack of imagination, and his slowness to understand new ideas would stand him in good stead in the profession. At medical college he had, let's say, a few teething troubles, but once he began to apply himself his hard work and dogged determination meant that he eventually achieved a perfectly respectable grade. He's a formidable orator and there's not been a single medical innovation that he hasn't argued against, and he's a total bull in an argument, ha! He adheres blindly to the teachings of the Greeks and

has utterly no interest whatever in these preposterous so called ‘discoveries’ like the circulation of the blood.

THOMAS presents a rolled up thesis to ANGELIQUE.

IOMAS: With your permission sir, I would like to present your daughter with a copy of my thesis against the ‘circulationists’.

ANGELIQUE: What would I do with it?

INETTE: There’s a nice picture, we’ll frame it and put it in your room.

IOMAS: (*To ANGELIQUE.*) And on Tuesday, would you like to come to the hospital and watch me dissect a woman?

INETTE: I’ve always said you can judge a man by the way he carves the joint.

IOMAS: Afterwards I’m giving a talk to the men, and there is wine and cheese for the ladies.

AFOIRERHOEA: (*To ARGAN.*) In the bedroom department, so to speak, he’s had a full check up and everything is in excellent working order. Indeed, the consultant, I wasn’t there myself naturally, I didn’t want to inhibit him, – the consultant said he was ‘alarmingly fecund’.

RGAN: Ooh. Do you intend that he practises medicine at court?

AFOIRERHOEA: Oh no! The problem with practising on the aristocracy is that when they’re ill they expect us doctors to cure them.

INETTE: What do you expect? You charge them enough!

AFOIRERHOEA: The general public, however, are much more convenient, from a doctoring perspective. The fee might be less, but it’s a

bigger market, and if a patient dies one very rarely has to answer for one's actions.

INETTE: Remind me. Exactly which bit of the Hippocratic oath emphasised the importance of lining your own pockets?

AFOIRERHOEA: A service given without charge is never valued.

(*To ARGAN.*) However, sir, even doctors, don't charge members of their own family.

RGAN: (*Feigning surprise.*) Oh really, excellent!

(*To CLEANTE.*) How about some music!

LEANTE: Eh?

RGAN: To celebrate.

LEANTE: Yes, but I'm 'the friend' of the music teacher, not 'the' music teacher.

RGAN: You came here to give Angelique a tutorial, so you must have talent yourself. Where are your instruments?

LEANTE: I...er...with her I was going to do...singing.

RGAN: Let's have a song then!

LEANTE: But I can't sing, I teach singing.

RGAN: Oh come on, don't be shy.

LEANTE: (*To ANGELIQUE.*) Sorry about this. Just sing whatever comes into your head.

(*To ALL.*) Er...it's a love story. In opera form.

RGAN: What's the story? Do we know it?

LEANTE: No, it's made up, as we go along, a new style of opera. Er...a poor shepherd is at a country fair and he is waiting for an entertainment to start, a play, and he sees out of the corner of his eye a thug pestering a young er...shepherdess.

RGAN: Does he rescue the girl?

LEANTE: Yes.

NGELIQUE: What is his name?

LEANTE: Er...Tircus. And she's called Phyllis. But then the shepherd looks into the eyes of the shepherdess and his life will never be the same again.

NGELIQUE: Does the shepherdess thank the shepherd?

LEANTE: Yes, with such wit and charm that his love is deepened. He knows at that moment that his life is transformed and that there is not a single deed that he would not perform to please her, no sacrifice would be too great to win just a moment's attention from such a beautiful girl... shepherd...shepherdess.

NGELIQUE: Does the shepherd stay and watch the play?

LEANTE: He doesn't exactly watch the play, but he stays there, just because he wants to be near her. And even though the play was long, Tircus wanted it to go on forever simply because she was there.

NGELIQUE: But surely she must care for him. Or there would be no story?

JEANTE: But he does not know that. And when the play finished he watched her leave, and then with nothing in his head or his heart but her, he too left and then began for him a most painful week of uncertainty and doubt. He tries each day to see her, to keep the image of her beauty in his mind, but he knows that she –

NGELIQUE: – Phyllis?

JEANTE: Yes, Phyllis is kept by her father under strict supervision, but driven by the violence of his passion he manages to get a note to her through one of her trusted servants.

INETTE: She's a shepherdess. She wouldn't have had servants.

NGELIQUE: Of course.

JEANTE: (*Struggling.*) Somehow, through a trusted...sheep, – he gets a note to her asking for her hand in marriage, but he discovers that her father has given her away to the village idiot who happens to be the son of a rich man, and that the wedding ceremony is only days away. Imagine the pain, the grief, in that young shepherd's heart! In desperation he risks all to get inside her father's house in order to hear his destiny from her alone, in her words. Whilst in the house he is witness to an entirely faked display of love by the aforementioned idiot. This enrages Tircus and so, out of control he can do nothing other than –

NGELIQUE: – Yes?

JEANTE: Sing.

(*Singing.*)

Phyllis I am suffering
Open your heart to me
Let us end the pain
And let me know my destiny.

NGELIQUE: (*Singing.*)

Tircus, here I am

Improvising a pause.

Phyllis is my name

Melancholy and miserable

Trapped by my commitments

Pause.

My situation's tragic not risible.

ARGAN applauds gently.

RGAN: Marvellous!

LEANTE: (*Singing.*)

Can your saviour be

The shepherd known as Tircus

Did a place open in your heart

Pause.

When you met him at the circus.

Ripple of applause from ALL.

NGELIQUE: (*Singing.*)

I will cast aside all fears

And despatch this face of woe

He is the man for me

Pause.

Oh Tircus I love...yo.

Applause.

LEANTE: (*Singing.*)

Yo love me

And I love yo

And together we will be

For every to-morrow.

Applause.

Sing it one more time

Sing forever mo

The sweetest words there are

Tircus, I love yo.

NGELIQUE: (*Singing.*)

Tircus, I love yo

LEANTE: (*Singing.*)

Sing and never stop

NGELIQUE: (*Operatic.*)

I love yo, I love yo

I love yo, I love yo.

LEANTE: (*Singing.*)

But as I hear those words

Thoughts like thunder come

A rival seeks your love

Pause.

With the advantage of an income.

ANGELIQUE: (*Singing.*)

A rival!? A rival?!

His presence is a torture

He cannot compare to you

Struggling.

True love don't need furniture

ARGAN: Brilliant!

JEANTE: (*Singing.*)

But her father likes this suitor

Whose riches makes him shine

Tell me Phyllis tell me

Struggling.

Will you with him in bed climb.

ANGELIQUE: (*Operatic.*)

I'd rather die!! Rather die!! Rather die!

I would rather die.

ANGELIQUE does a bit of a dying swan. Applause, except ARGAN.

ARGAN: Hang on! Stop clapping! What does her father think about the situation?

JEANTE: He doesn't get involved.

ARGAN: But he's her father for God's sake! He could have had her married into the richest family in the village! You can't have young people marrying each other willy nilly on the basis of a three second crush! Madness! And this Tircus he sounds like a right one, and as for the girl,

going against her father, ha! No, that play of yours has got some very dangerous ideas in it. If I were you I'd have it looked at.

LEANTE: I'm sorry you didn't like it sir.

RGAN: It was rubbish. You can go now. Ah, Beline, darling.

CLEANTE leaves with a look to ANGELIQUE, and BELINE enters.

This is Monsieur Diafoirerhoea's son.

THOMAS: (*Stepping forward.*) Madam, in all the universe can there be a more noble position than 'mother-in-law' and in your face one can see –

BELINE: I'm delighted to meet you. What's your name?

THOMAS: – can see...step-mother and in your face one can see –

(*Quickly.*) in all the universe can there be a more noble position than step-mother and in your face one can see – Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn!

AFOIRERHOE: Thomas! Please!

RGAN: You've missed some wonderful speaking.

GINETTE: The second father; statue of Memnon; heliotrope petals. That's my favourite.

RGAN: Daughter! Take this gentleman's hand now and accept his offer of marriage.

ANGELIQUE: I don't want to rush into anything.

RGAN: What!?

ANGELIQUE: We hardly know each other. A little more time will maybe

allow a special feeling to grow.

IOMAS: Mademoiselle, I was born with a special feeling for you.

NGELIQUE: You are very quick, sir, but I need to take stock of your many obvious qualities and allow –

RGAN: – Nonsense, if you marry him then you'll have all the time in the world to get to know him.

NGELIQUE: But marriage is a bond of love, and love cannot be forced. If Thomas is a gentleman he would not want his wife to be coerced against her will into his arms.

IOMAS: Au contraire! I've always admired the Ancient Greeks. They'd break into a house, snatch the girl they wanted to marry, and drag her off. It seemed to work well enough for them!

NGELIQUE: The Ancient Greeks are all dead. A man about to marry would do anything to make his bride happy, surely?

IOMAS: Nego consequentium! Illogical! It is a complex argument miss, but I'll try and explain it in simple terms, so you'll understand. For the first part I concede absolutely that a husband should put his wife's happiness before his own. However, that argument, is predicated on the prior 'possession' of the said object, 'the wife'. Yet, obviously if one employs that argument, then one would have to concede that prior to the 'possession', before he is married, he is not a husband and thus has no husbandly obligations. So the happiness of the 'future wife' can be of no concern to the 'future husband' whatsoever.

INETTE: He's fresh out of college, you'll never win the debate.

ELINE: Is there some other boy?

NGELIQUE: If there were, I would ensure that he was acceptable to you.

ELINE: (*To ARGAN.*) Don't force her to marry. I've told you already what to do with her.

NGELIQUE: I have no objection to obeying any reasonable commands made by you but —

RGAN: — But! But what?! I'm beginning to look stupid here.

ELINE: You're not seriously suggesting that you want to choose your own husband?

NGELIQUE: All I ask is that my father does not force me to marry someone I know I cannot love!

DINETTE: (*To THOMAS and DIAFOIRERHOEA.*) Is it time for cake?

NGELIQUE: Some people marry for reasons other than love. But I only want to marry a man I can love and stay with for the rest of my life. There are girls who would marry a chair if it meant they could escape their parents. And then there are women for whom marriage is a career. Their work is hopping from bed to bed and will to will.

ELINE: Ha, ha! That's true there are women like that!

NGELIQUE: I know, I've met one.

ELINE: You're a very recalcitrant young girl, and I don't know why we tolerate you.

NGELIQUE: You won't provoke me.

ELINE: I have never known such insolence.

ANGELIQUE: I will not lose my temper because I know that that is what you want me to do, because it will strengthen your case with my father for sending me away. Excuse me.

ANGELIQUE makes to leave.

RGAN: Listen! You've got four days to decide. Marry this young man or I'll have you sent to a convent. There's your choice!

ANGELIQUE leaves with TOINETTE in tow, scheming.

(*To BELINE.*) Darling, don't you get upset now. Leave her to me.

ELINE: Oh thank you poppet, I hate to leave you but I have something urgent I need to sort out in town.

RGAN: Why not drop in on your solicitor friend and tell him to get a move on with the will?

ELINE: Oh! I never thought of that. I suppose I could try and fit in Monsieur Bonnefoi.

RGAN: Love you.

ELINE: Love you sweetheart.

BELINE kisses him and leaves.

RGAN: Now there's a good woman. I'm unbelievably lucky.

AFOIRERHOEA: We must be going now sir.

RGAN: Before you go, could you possibly – in your professional capacity that is – tell me exactly how desperately ill I am?

AFOIRERHOEA: Thomas! Come! Let us test your learning! Quid dicis?!

IOMAS: Dico!

DIAFOIRERHOEA and THOMAS take a wrist each in order to feel his pulse.

Ubi est? (*Beat.*) Ubi est?! (*Starts to panic.*) Non possum!

AFOIRERHOEA: Exspecto!

Pause.

IOMAS: Me Hercule!! This is the pulse of a very ill man.

RGAN: Really? Oh dear.

IOMAS: It's there one minute and gone the next.

AFOIRERHOEA: Very good!

IOMAS: The only regularity it has is its predictable irregularity.

AFOIRERHOEA: Astute.

IOMAS: There's something terribly wrong with your spleen.

AFOIRERHOEA: I agree.

RGAN: Doctor Purgon said it was my liver.

AFOIRERHOEA: Spleen. The spleen is next door to the liver.

RGAN: Doctor Purgon wants me to eat nothing but boiled eggs.

AFOIRERHOEA: Roast / boiled / meat / eggs, whatever, it's all food

isn't it! Come on Thomas, we must be going. Doctor Purgon is a brilliant man and you couldn't be in better hands.

They make to leave.

RGAN: How many grains of salt should I put in my egg?

AFOIRERHOEA: Two, four, six, eight. It doesn't matter, as long as it's an even number.

IOMAS: Odd numbers are for making up medicines.

RGAN: Thank you. Take care!

DIAFOIRERHOEA and THOMAS leave. BELINE enters, dressed for a trip to town, with LOUISON.

ELINE: Darling, I was just about to leave when I noticed a young man in your daughter's room. He saw me and ran off.

RGAN: That explains everything!

ELINE: Louison was in there with her sister and can tell you all about it. I'd better go. Monsieur Bonnefoi doesn't like to be kept waiting.

BELINE leaves.

RGAN: Look at me. What did you see?

LOUISON: I didn't see anything daddy.

RGAN: Wrong answer. I understand you have a story to tell.

LOUISON: I can tell you the story of the Frog and the Crow.

RGAN: I'm not interested in Frogs. Come on!

LOUISE: I don't know what you mean.

ROSE: Agh! Daughters! What was going on in Angelique's room?

LOUISE: Nothing.

ROSE: (*Holding his cane.*) Can you see this!?

LOUISE: Oh daddy, please don't beat me!

She throws herself down at his feet.

My sister told me to say nothing! I'll tell you everything.

ROSE: Good. But first I must beat you for lying.

LOUISE: Please daddy!

He grabs her by the throat. During the next she does a fake choke, and fake death faint.

Agh! Daddy, you're hurting me, aaah –

ROSE: Oh my God! Oh my little baby! Louise, my little sugar plum. No, no, this can't be. What have I done? Loui! Loui! Come on, don't do this to me.

LOUISE: I'm not completely dead.

ROSE: You crafty little minx. God, you had me that time! I'll only forgive you if you tell me everything.

LOUISE: I promise daddy, but don't tell Angelique that I told you.

ROSE: I won't. But no lies, because my little Pope here, my little finger,

remember he can tell when someone's lying.

DUISON: I was in my sister's room, when a man came in.

RGAN: No!?

DUISON: Yes. I asked him who he was and he said he was her music teacher.

RGAN: Music teacher or friend of the music teacher?

ARGAN wiggles the Pope.

DUISON: That's right, the friend of the music teacher. Then my sister came in and said to this man, 'Go away, get out, this is making things worse!' But he wouldn't go.

RGAN: And what kind of things did he say to her?

DUISON: I can't remember.

ARGAN wiggles the Pope.

He said that he loved her. And that she was the most beautiful girl in the world. And he knelt down before her and kissed her hands.

RGAN: And then what?

DUISON: Then my step-mummy came to the door and he ran away.

RGAN: That's it?

DUISON: Yes. That's all.

ARGAN's little finger / Pope starts behaving really strangely.

RGAN: Whoah! What's happening?

LOUISE: Daddy, that's all!

ARGAN sticks his finger in his ear and listens to it.

RGAN: Shhh!! The Pope's whispering something to me.

(Funny voice.) 'She's telling porky pies. Beat her! Beat her!'

LOUISE: No! Daddy, please! I've told the truth. That Pope of yours just doesn't like girls.

RGAN: Very well, off you go, go on!

LOUISE leaves.

Kaw! Who'd have children eh? You never get any time to yourself. I'm a busy man! I've got a life-threatening illness to worry about!

He contorts his face in pain.

Agghh! Toinette! Toinette!! Help!! Oh, what's happening?

Enter TOINETTE.

I can feel a motion! quick!

TOINETTE: Yeah, yeah, they're the only feelings you've got left.

RGAN: Don't you dare cheek me, you insolent cow!

She wheels him off. Enter BERARDE.

BERARDE: Argan! Brother!

Enter TOINETTE.

INETTE: Ah good, you got the message?

ERALDE: Yes, where is the dying man?

INETTE: Your brother is momentarily indisposed. He's engrossed in the daily obligation of nature which you and I perform, alone, without advertisement or publicity, but which he is driven to share with the whole world, as if it were the birth of a son.

ERALDE: Ugh. Don't.

INETTE: We need you to tell your brother that he's making a big mistake with Angelique's arranged marriage.

ERALDE: I've met him. The boy's a moron.

INETTE: And that wife of his is on the brink of cleaning him out completely.

ERALDE: What? Beline?

INETTE: Yes, he's convinced himself that he's dying so he's going to sign over all his wealth to her friend.

ERALDE: What!? Oh no. I never did like her.

INETTE: If we convince your brother that he's not dying then there'll be no need for a will. I suggest we start by dismissing Doctor Purgon.

ERALDE: He's the family doctor.

INETTE: He's a fraud.

ERALDE: True.

DINETTE: We need a second opinion on your brother's health.

ERALDE: But he's quite happy with Purgon's first opinion. He loves being ill! Why waste more money?

DINETTE: We must save him from himself.

ERALDE: We have to do something.

DINETTE: I have an idea. It's mad but it might just work. Can you act?

ERALDE: Act? I'm a brewer. I can't act, I'm a terrible actor.

DINETTE: Then I'll have to do it then. Can you come back tomorrow?

ERALDE: No problem. What are we going to do?

DINETTE: We're going to cure him with the truth.

To black.

Interval.

Act Three

The same, the following day. ARGAN is seated on his commode getting on with some business. Enter TOINETTE dusting or cleaning. ARGAN stands and motions to TOINETTE that the pan needs emptying. TOINETTE looks into the pan, looks back at ARGAN, looks in the pan again.

ARGAN: What's wrong with it?

TOINETTE: Why do you do it in here when the latrine is only twenty feet over there?

ARGAN: The latrine's no good for inspection. As soon as it's done it's gone.

TOINETTE: It takes all the fun out of it you mean?

ARGAN: Just tell me what it looks like!

TOINETTE: If inspection is the motive, why don't you look?

ARGAN: It's like opening the post. If I know it's bad news I always get someone else to read it.

TOINETTE: This one's unique. Utterly original. A one off.

ARGAN: Oh my God. Why?

TOINETTE: Because it's the last one I'm emptying – ever.

ARGAN: Then it's your last day here then isn't it!?

TOINETTE: Yes, if all goes to plan.

TOINETTE leaves with the pan, slamming the door behind her.

RGAN: (*Shouted after her.*) What's in the pan?! Tell me what it looks like! You insolent fat saphist!

Re-enter TOINETTE holding the pan and its contents like a weapon. We can see urine and a turd or two. ARGAN backs off.

TOINETTE: I'm getting sick of this recurring homosexual theme.

ARGAN keeps backing away. Enter BERALDE.

BERALDE: Beautiful morning isn't it!

BERALDE looks into the pan.

That's what I like about round here, the informality.

TOINETTE leaves slamming the door behind her.

RGAN: I'm sorry brother, she's a snake, that one.

(*Brighter.*) Very cheap though.

BERALDE: And how are you?

RGAN: Very poorly.

BERALDE: What do you mean 'very poorly'?

RGAN: Poorly. As in not well.

BERALDE: Exactly how 'not well' are you?

RGAN: I'm incredibly and sensationally not well!

ERALDE: Oh.

RGAN: And how are you?

ERALDE: Dunno. Never think about it.

RGAN: What!? That's very very foolish. You should go and have a check up. You might have something serious.

During the next ARGAN gets increasingly excited.

ERALDE: Brother, I need to discuss a delicate issue with you, but I know what you're like, and I need you to promise me that you'll not get excited.

RGAN: Of course I won't get excited.

ERALDE: You won't start shouting?

RGAN: Why would I want to start shouting?!

ERALDE: And if ultimately we disagree you'll make a commitment now to talk rationally and calmly –

RGAN: – Yes, yes!

ERALDE: – with me and work towards a compromise position which at least addresses the problem in a practical manner, taking out of the situation all emotion.

RGAN: Yes!! Of course I'll stay bloody calm!!! How dare you suggest that I'm emotional and can't discuss things in a rational manner!!!??? I've never –

ERALDE: Why are you trying to marry Angelique off to a doctor?

RGAN: I want a doctor in the family. In the house. Handy. Here!

ERALDE: By that logic you'll be marrying Louison off to an apothecary next.

RGAN: That's not a bad idea actually. Do you know any?

ERALDE: And I understand that if Angelique doesn't consent to this arrangement then you'll have her sent to a convent?

RGAN: The choice is hers.

ERALDE: I imagine this wife of yours would be delighted to see both your offspring packed off to nunneries and dedicating themselves to God and in particular 'renouncing all interest in worldly goods'.

RGAN: You've never liked Beline. Why does everybody hate her? Have I missed something?!

ERALDE: I don't want to discuss Beline, she's obviously a saint. You're not ill at all are you?

RGAN: What?

ERALDE: You're perfectly well.

RGAN: How dare – !!??

ERALDE: I don't think I know anybody more well and less ill than you. Your doctor's been trying to kill you with his cures for the best part of two years now. You've had leeches, piercings, purgings; you've been drained, spun, squeezed, squashed, stretched, and steamed. Every time I come round here you're on some new controlled eating regime. One week it's nothing but vegetables, the next week it's fruit. The worst was that ridiculous month when you ate nothing but meat – I mean, what kind of a

diet is that, it nearly killed you. You lost three stone. It's a miracle you're still alive, and proof that you're as strong as an ox.

RGAN: Doctor Purgon is the reason I'm still alive.

ERALDE: Your profound good health is the reason you're still alive.

RGAN: You have no faith in Doctor Purgon then?

ERALDE: In the last two years he has diagnosed you as suffering from many diverse ailments, three of which – deafness; insomnia; and worms – he treated with exactly the same expensive concoction of blood freshly bled from the spleen of a living duck.

RGAN: It worked for the worms.

ERALDE: You never had worms in the first place!

RGAN: It was preventative! Men at all levels in society – many more learned and wise than you – when they get ill, go to the doctor.

ERALDE: I am sure there is a hierarchy of wisdom and learning amongst lemmings too. But when the end beckons they all make an appointment with the same cliff.

RGAN: But doctors have faith in their art.

ERALDE: It shouldn't be an 'art', that's the problem. At present medicine is a bedfellow of the Humanities and the Classics, which in turn, themselves, are contaminated by Religion.

RGAN: Brother! Do not speak against God in this house!

ERALDE: Our priests have a defined list of ailments and illnesses which they would have us believe are directly dispensed by God as punishments

for sins, for our lack of faith, and whatever nonsense. God made our bodies as machines, mysterious machines, which either work or break down. Doctors should concern themselves with the nitty gritty, the nature of the thing. Look, I'm a brewer. If my beer fails to ferment, I don't look to heaven for an explanation, I look at what went into the brew; the yeast, the hops, the water, the quantities, the temperature. I do not consider for one moment that my beer has been made rancid by God because he is punishing me for, I don't know...shouting at my wife. If I've shouted at my wife I'll be punished for that in good time anyway, not by God either, but by my wife.

RGAN: You sound like you support the circulationists?

ERALDE: And why is the idea of blood circulation treated with such contempt by doctors? Because it's not already written down in their books; it is a challenge to the Church, the King, and God. Amazingly, the very last thing that concerns doctors is the truth!

RGAN: But I feel ill. And when I'm treated I feel better.

ERALDE: No. You like two things. Being ill, and letting everybody know you're ill. Being ill for you, defines, it is who you are. Don't forget I've seen you at several parties and functions. People say to me, 'What do you do?' And I say: 'I brew beer.' People say to you, 'What do you do?' And you say: 'I ache all over.' I remember that first time, I've never seen you happier, when you told me – 'I've only got six months to live' –

RGAN: – Oh, that was a couple of years ago!

ERALDE: I know, but the twinkle in your eye told me everything. At last, a purpose in life, a clear identity, – to die on time!

RGAN: I didn't die though did I? So the cures must have worked.

ERALDE: There are two sorts of doctors. Those who believe it all, and

make money out of it; and those who know it's all nonsense, and make money out of it. Medicine is an exercise in hope and disappointment. It will remain so until doctors understand the true nature of our bodies. But even then, there will still be people who will not accept that the spirit world is not involved in the bodily world; there will be people who will be staggered and insulted by the knowledge that their bodies are machines. I predict that even in four or five centuries time, when a cure is readily available for every ailment, and shown to work by a series of provings, such people will still turn their backs on the proven cure and choose to drink dandelion sap, or eat bug oil, or coat their skin in badger saliva. These people only do this because they want to be different, special. This 'vanity' is so strong that it even outweighs their desire to be cured. They suffer from a sickness which fogs their eyes, rots their brains, and slows each and every one of their critical faculties until eventually they are terminally credulous.

RGAN: What disease is that?

ERALDE: Self-obsession.

RGAN: You've just come here to criticise me!

ERALDE: Not at all. I have a spare ticket to Molière's latest comedy. I thought that might cheer you up.

RGAN: Who's he having a go at this time?

ERALDE: Doctors.

RGAN: Ha! And what right has he got to libel hard-working professional men, when all he does is swan about all day long in the company of a load of poofs being ironic. An honest day's work would kill him.

ERALDE: So the stage should only be populated by kings and princes?

RGAN: All I'm saying is that if I was his doctor I'd take my revenge when he falls ill. 'Ill are we now Molière? You need me now do you Molière?! Got a bit of a life-threatening cough have we, Molière?! Well, here's my advice to you! Die, die, DIE!!!'

ERALDE: You don't want to see the play then?

RGAN: You know me and the theatre. Huh! I'd rather spend the evening having my teeth pulled out. Was that all?

ERALDE: Don't send Angelique to a convent. She is young, and a little headstrong that is all.

RGAN: And is there anything else you disapprove of in the way I run my own house?

ERALDE: You're not choosing a husband for Angelique. You're choosing a son-in-law for yourself. A mistake would mean a lifetime's misery for your own child.

Enter Monsieur FLEURANT with a large colonic irrigation machine on wheels. There can be attendants, operatives. FLEURANT leads the procession holding a pipe in gloved hands. The following activity should all be done as a regular routine, almost prosaically.

RGAN: Is it that time already? How are you today Monsieur Fleurant?

FLEURANT: Well.

He lifts the flap of ARGAN's shirt tail and thrusts the pipe up his arse.

All the better for seeing you.

The machine starts.

ERALDE: What are you doing?!

RGAN: My daily enema. Ooo! Cold.

There is metallic ching in the machine as if a swallowed coin has been flushed out. FLEURANT and the operatives all look at the jar simultaneously.

ERALDE: You don't need an enema every day!

EURANT: (*Offering his hand to shake.*) I don't believe we've had the pleasure.

ERALDE: (*Refusing his hand.*) No, and you never will! This is ridiculous!

EURANT: Please tell your manservant to keep his ignorance to himself.

RGAN: He's not my –

ERALDE: – That is no way to speak to a gentleman. You are obviously not used to addressing people's faces!

RGAN: He's my brother.

EURANT: And I am Monsieur's apothecary. I am not used to being interfered with in the operation of my profession.

ERALDE: You're the one doing the interfering!

EURANT: Preposterous!

ERALDE: I've known some interruptions in my time but this takes the biscuit. My brother and I were in the middle of an important discussion concerning the future matrimonial prospects for my niece and, without invitation or introduction, you mince in here and shove a pipe up his arse.

He pulls the pipe out of ARGAN's arse.

ARGAN: Ah!

LEURANT: Such language, sir.

BERALDE: What do you call it?

LEURANT: In the Latin, anus. In Greek, proacus.

BERALDE: Which do you prefer?

LEURANT: Me? Er...the Greek. If you don't know the correct term for it, I doubt you understand it's function either.

BERALDE: At least, I know enough not to try and talk out of mine.

LEURANT: How dare you!? Monsieur is terribly ill!! This medication is in accordance with the regime of treatment prescribed by Doctor Purgon.

FLEURANT shoves the pipe back in.

ARGAN: Ooo!

BERALDE: I'm not frightened of Doctor Purgon, though I should be, he treated me once, and to be honest, I'm lucky to be alive!

BERALDE pulls the pipe out.

ARGAN: Ah!

LEURANT: Are you trying to prevent my patient from taking his enema?

Shoves pipe back in, roughly.

ARGAN: Oooo!! Careful!

BERALDE: This is not a medical enema! This is a financial transfusion. You and your partner in crime, Doctor Purgon, are sucking my brother dry!

Removes pipe, roughly.

ARGAN: Aggh!

FLEURANT shoves it back in.

Ooo!

During the next a tug of war ensues between BERALDE and FLEURANT with the pipe. BERALDE wins.

FLEURANT: If you insist on preventing your brother having his treatment I shall call on Doctor Purgon.

FLEURANT exits in a fluster. Door slam.

BERALDE: With friends like that, who needs enemas?

ARGAN: It's easy to criticise medicine when you're healthy. It's not so easy for me, I happen to be very seriously ill.

BERALDE: And what exactly is wrong with you?

ARGAN: (*Getting excited.*) For Christ's sake! I wish you had what I've got. Walk a mile in my shoes. One bloody mile!

Enter Doctor PURGON accompanied by TOINETTE. Door slam.

PURGON: (*Addressing ARGAN.*) Monsieur, I hear that you are refusing to take my colonic clyster.

RGAN: What?! No it's –

RGON: – It's a sad day when the patient turns against his doctor.

INETTE: The end of the world.

RGAN: No, you've got the wrong end of the –

RGON: – I've never been so insulted.

ERALDE: Only because the dead don't complain.

RGON: Refusing the cleansing clyster which I had the pleasure to make up myself which –

RGAN: – Listen! –

RGON: – was a classic clyster prepared according to the rules laid down by the ancients –

INETTE: – He has no respect for anybody.

RGON: – a clot-clearing cleansing clyster which was sure to have a most wonderful effect on Monsieur's bowel.

RGAN: My brother, him, it was he who –

RGON: – How dare you reject my clyster!?

INETTE: How dare you!?

RGON: This is an assault on the medical profession in general!

INETTE: You should hear what he says about doctors behind your back.

RGON: (*To TOINETTE.*) What?

INETTE: When you're not here. Kaw!

RGON: I declare now, Monsieur, that you will no longer have the privilege of my professional services. That is my final account.

He gives him an invoice.

You will need to find another doctor, and if you do I hope you show him more respect. I am severing all relations with you.

INETTE: Quite right. He's terrible.

RGON: And! I no longer wish to be associated with you or your family in any way.

He takes out a legal document.

This is a substantial bond which I was going to donate to my nephew, Thomas Diafoirerhoea on his marriage to your daughter.

He tears it up violently.

RGAN: It wasn't me. It was my brother. He caused all the trouble.

RGON: Since you're not interested in getting better, since you've failed to show that obedience which one owes to one's doctors, I have no choice but to abandon you to your condition, and allow the imbalance in your bowels, and the acidity of your spleen, and the fecundity of your rampant bad humours to finally come together in an orchestra of malignancy which will destroy you totally within four days.

INETTE: Oooh! Four days to live!

RGAN: Oh my God no!

JRGON: You will fall into bradypepsia.

RGAN: Agh!

JRGON: From bradypepsia to dyspepsia!

RGAN: Oh God!

JRGON: From dyspepsia to apepsia.

RGAN: No!

JRGON: From apepsia to diarrhoea.

INETTE: Oh no! Not diarrhoea!

JRGON: From diarrhoea to dysentery.

RGAN: Doctor Purgon!

JRGON: From dysentery to dropsy.

RGAN: Doctor, doctor, doctor, doctor.

ARGAN sags as if dying.

JRGON: ...and from dropsy to a complete, and utterly irretrievable state of lifelessness. Huh!!

PURGON makes to leave, but in the doorway turns, and almost tearfully:

I could have cured you.

Door slam and he's gone.

RGAN: (*To BERALDE.*) Don't you see what you've done!? You've killed

me!

BERALDE: Rubbish.

TOINETTE gives BERALDE a wink and leaves.

RGAN: Ugh! Oooooohhhhh! I can feel it, now. Aggghh! It's happening. I'm finally on the wane!

BERALDE: You're mad!

RGAN: Didn't you hear him!? He said I'd be dead in four days.

BERALDE: And who is he? God? Look on the bright side, this is a chance to find another doctor, someone who knows what he's talking about.

Enter TOINETTE.

TOINETTE: Sir, there's a doctor to see you.

RGAN: Whose doctor?

TOINETTE: No-one's in particular. He was just passing and he heard you moaning.

RGAN: Oh. Send him in then.

TOINETTE: It's funny you know, but he's the absolute spitting image of me. It's incredible. If my mother had had a son, well, you wait till you see him.

She rushes out. Door slam.

BERALDE: The entire medical community know about you, your illnesses and your money. They must be listening in at the windows.

RGAN: (*Worried.*) I'd never heard of half of those illnesses Purgon mentioned, I think –

Enter TOINETTE disguised as a doctor.

INETTE: – I am honoured sir, and would like to proffer to you my humble expertise in all manner of purgings, bleedings, amputations, irrigations, exhumations, and evacuations of the body, mind, and spirit.

RGAN: Thank you sir.

(*To BERALDE.*) He's the image of Toinette!

INETTE: Ah! I forgot to tell my valet something. Excuse me, I'll be back in a tick.

TOINETTE leaves.

RGAN: My God! If I didn't know any better I'd say that was Toinette in a hat.

ERALDE: These things happen. It's a coincidence certainly, but not unknown.

RGAN: The resemblance is striking!

TOINETTE enters – so quickly that it's hard to believe she was the doctor.

INETTE: You called sir?

RGAN: No. I didn't call you. Hey, wait here and take a look at this doctor. He's the absolute spit of you. Stay, stay!

INETTE: Can't. Sorry. Very busy. Things to do.

TOINETTE leaves.

RGAN: Isn't she? It's amazing.

Enter TOINETTE as doctor.

INETTE: I beg your pardon sir.

RGAN: Have you met my nurse, Toinette, she's –

INETTE: – it is an honour to meet such a famous invalid as you. I have travelled far.

RGAN: I'm famous?

INETTE: You are the world's most famous hopeless case. I have travelled from the farthest corner of the Mughal Empire to be here. I am related by blood to Babar himself.

RGAN: Really. Mm. I am your servant sir. And you're a doctor?

INETTE: I'm a consultant.

RGAN: Oh good.

INETTE: How old would you say I am?

RGAN: Twenty-six, twenty-seven.

INETTE: Ninety-two.

RGAN: Ninety-two?!

INETTE: Ninety-two and a half. My body has been treated by my medications consistently for the last seventy years. I now travel from town to town, from country to country in search of medical challenges.

I'm afraid I have no interest in spots, or minor rashes.

RGAN: I do have some rashes, but fortunately I have many other more serious complaints.

INETTE: Excellent. Nowadays, I don't get out of bed unless there's a full blown plague to treat. It has to be a chronic fever, a life-threatening pleurisy, or a multiple limb amputation. So what I dearly hope sir is for you to have as many serious diseases as possible and to have been given up as a lost cause by the medical profession.

RGAN: That's it! That's me! Just this minute actually!

INETTE: And we have been brought together! There is a God! Let me feel your pulse. Come on, come on! Beat! I'll get you drumming! Who is your doctor?

RGAN: Doctor Purgon.

INETTE: Oh, ha! Ho, ho, ho. Hee, hee, hee. Really, Purgon. My, my. Let's just say 'not in the top ten of finest medical brains'. What does he say is wrong with you?

RGAN: The liver.

INETTE: Wrong. It's the lung.

RGAN: My lungs?

INETTE: Yes. Is there any pain?

RGAN: I get a pain here. (*Points to his forehead.*)

INETTE: Yup. The lungs. Ah! I see you have a full head of hair.

ERALDE: Yes, the outside of his head's working perfectly.

MINETTE: That's the lungs again.

RGAN: Occasionally I get a really piercing pain in my stomach, as if I had colic?

MINETTE: No it's not colic, it's the lungs. And you'll be eating well, yeah?

RGAN: Yes, I have good appetite.

MINETTE: That's the lungs you see. Do you like a drink of red wine?

RGAN: Why yes, I do.

MINETTE: Always the same with lung problems. Do you get a little drowsy, you know, in the evenings, after a good meal with plenty of wine?

RGAN: Oh dear yes! Is that serious?!

MINETTE: And in the mornings, after a good sleep, are you a bit fuzzy for the first couple of minutes?

RGAN: Oh God, yes I am.

MINETTE: Mmm. What does your doctor tell you to eat?

RGAN: Soup.

MINETTE: No!

RGAN: Chicken.

MINETTE: Idiot!

RGAN: Veal.

INETTE: Never!

RGAN: Eggs?

INETTE: No, no, no.

RGAN: They're fresh eggs.

INETTE: The worst!

RGAN: I have to drink my wine diluted.

INETTE: Ignorantus, ignoranta, ignorantum! Drink your wine neat, and to thicken your blood you should eat lots of good fat beef, good fat pork, ripe Dutch cheese, cereals, and buns. Buns help everything else 'coagulate'. That means 'stick'.

RGAN: So lots of sticky buns then?

INETTE: By the ton. Now then, in order to cure you the first thing you have to do is sack that doctor of yours.

RGAN: Well, that's done.

INETTE: And I'll send one of my trainees to administer my prescriptions.

RGAN: That's very good of you.

INETTE: Are you right-handed or left-handed?

RGAN: Right-handed.

DINETTE: We'll amputate the left arm then.

RGAN: What?

DINETTE: If you don't use it that much, you'll not miss it, and at the moment it's taking all the nourishment from your other arm.

RGAN: Yes, but...it's my arm. I've had it years.

DINETTE: You could do to have one of those eyes out too.

RGAN: Eh?

DINETTE: When you've got two eyes, the one can confuse the other. We'll just gouge it out. Shall we book you in for Tuesday?

RGAN: I'm not in a rush.

DINETTE: Farewell, I am sorry I have to leave you so soon but I have a consultation about another of my patients who died yesterday.

RGAN: He died?

DINETTE: Yes, goodbye.

TOINETTE leaves.

ERALDE: Very clever man.

RGAN: I'm not sure about him.

ERALDE: What didn't you like?

RGAN: After a month with him, I wouldn't have any limbs left. Anyway, I didn't trust him.

ERALDE: Why not?

RGAN: He didn't charge me anything.

Enter TOINETTE.

INETTE: Get off me!

RGAN: What's going on?

INETTE: Put it this way, he wasn't trying to take my pulse.

RGAN: Now that is impressive, at ninety-two.

ERALDE: We must talk about my niece. There is an alternative possible match, now that Doctor Purgon has broken off the contract with Thomas Diafoirerhoea.

RGAN: No! She's going to a nunnery. That'll teach the little minx. I know what's been going on with this 'sweetheart'.

ERALDE: What have you got against love? The feelings are natural and honest and can lead to marriage.

RGAN: She's going to be a nun. N U N. Nun.

ERALDE: I know who's behind this.

RGAN: There you go again, no-one likes her. My dear, dear wife.

ERALDE: She's really got you on a string hasn't she?

INETTE: Sir, please don't speak ill of Madame. She is without artifice, pure, loving.

RGAN: Tell him how she worries about my illnesses.

INETTE: Yes, always worrying about the seriousness of the ailment, always wondering what she will do if he passes away.

(*To BERALDE.*) How can I convince you of her loyalty?

(*To ARGAN.*) Sir, I have an idea. I can prove to your brother once and for all the depth of Madame's love for you.

RGAN: How?

INETTE: Stretch out in your chair and pretend to be dead.

RGAN: What?

INETTE: Madame has just arrived home, and will come in here shortly, if she discovers you dead, then your brother will see the grief and agony of her suffering when she sees him.

RGAN: It's unnecessary, but I see your plan. But don't leave her too long in the throws of grief, people have been known to die of a broken heart you know.

INETTE: I wouldn't worry about that.

(*To BERALDE.*) Hide over here sir.

ARGAN acts dead. Then he sits up, worried.

RGAN: Will it make me ill?

INETTE: What?

RGAN: Pretending to be dead.

DINETTE: No! Get down! Here she comes.

Enter BELINE. TOINETTE starts shrieking.

ELINE: What's happened?!

DINETTE: Oh! Madame, your husband –

ELINE: (*Hopeful.*) Yes?

DINETTE: He's gone. He's deceased, and passed on.

ELINE: (*Hopeful.*) Is he dead?

DINETTE: Oh! Yes. He's hopelessly dead.

ELINE: Good! At last! Kaw! He took his time, I thought it would never happen. Stop wailing!

DINETTE: Sorry. It just felt like the right thing to do.

ELINE: He's not worth it. Good riddance I say. I've had to marry some strange men in my time but never before have I been stuck with such a disgusting, nauseating, foul pig as...that.

DINETTE: There's no need to be polite madame, he's dead, say what you really mean.

ELINE: It was like living with a rotting corpse. Always blowing his nose; inspecting the snot; buckets everywhere – full of bile, urine, spit. Stools – dated, labelled and stored in boxes.

DINETTE: I look forward to your tearful eulogy at the funeral.

ELINE: And he was a bore. A tedious, soporific, deadly bore.

TOINETTE: He said nice things about you.

ELINE: Sex. And a son. That's all he wanted. Ill? He was never too ill when it came to that. Ha! Colic? Temperature? Contagion? Nothing affected it. Twenty-four hours a day he was ready. You could hang a flag off it.

(Directly to TOINETTE.) We need to conceal his death until I've sorted out the will. Damn! I'll have to forge his signature. I need your help now. You'll be well rewarded Toinette. And we've got to get those two girls of his off to a convent. So much to do! Ha, ha! First things first, his keys.

BELINE puts a hand in one of ARGAN's pockets.

ARGAN: Darling!

ELINE: *(Genuinely horrified.)* Agh!

TOINETTE: *(False shriek.)* Ah! The deceased has un-deceased himself!

BELINE makes to exit.

ELINE: What!? Aggh!!! What is this!? You're not dead!?

ARGAN: No! My God no, not legally dead, no. God! I can't believe this! This...this...what....I mean...I can't believe this! You...you...I've played dead for two minutes but...but...obviously...you...you! You've been playing 'loving wife' for years! This...get out! Ill...yes...Ill I may be but...I have never been...look at me I'm lost for words! I have never been so sickened by anything in my life as by the words...the words I have just heard coming from...that...your sewer, yes! sewer of a mouth. Such pure wickedness, such rank evil...I've never, never! I can't believe it! My brother...he, and my servant...my brother out of love, my servant from loyalty...they staged this...this performance for my benefit, and I thank them, thank you...thank you. You are now gloriously shown for

what you are. You should be a professional actress, maybe Molière will take you on. Well!? What do you have to say for yourself?

Pause, during which BELINE is struggling to find anything to say.

An actress, yet now speechless. What is it they say in the theatre? Beline, exit stage left.

ELINE: (*Backing off.*) No, no, no.

RGAN: Yes, yes, yes! Get out of my house!

ELINE: I have been with you for three years. I deserve –

RGAN: – You deserve to be whipped!

ELINE: I'm going to see my solicitor.

RGAN: No-one's stopping you!

ELINE: You'll not get away with this.

RGAN: If you can keep your hands off him for half an hour maybe he can prepare the divorce papers!

BELINE exits.

Ha, ha! Extraordinary! Brilliant Toinette, brilliant. Oh my God! It feels as if my eyes have been opened. What have I been doing for all these years! This has been a big lesson for me. My life begins today! Thank you brother. You've saved me.

ERALDE: (*Out of hiding.*) We had to do something.

MINETTE: Did you hear what she said!? I'd never have believed it! Wait!

That's Angelique, let's do this again, –

ARGAN: Again? What? Trick Angelique?

JOINETTE: Don't you want to know how she truly feels about you? Lie back!

ARGAN plays dead again. BERALDE hides. ANGELIQUE enters. TOINETTE wails.

ANGELIQUE: Toinette!? What is it?!

JOINETTE: Your father... Aooooohh!!

ANGELIQUE goes over to ARGAN.

He was alive just a minute ago, we were talking, then he blew his nose, and then...aaaahhh!! DEAD!!

ANGELIQUE: *(Through genuine tears.)* Father! Oh father!! Oh Lord please don't take my father away from me, he is all I have. Please, please, no, no, this can't be true. His love and happiness is all I have ever craved, please Lord save him. Not now, oh no, when he is unhappy with me. That would be unbearable!

Enter CLEANTE.

CLEANTE: What has happened Angelique? Why are you crying?

ANGELIQUE: I have just lost the most precious thing in my life. My father has died.

CLEANTE: Good heavens. I'm sorry. That's terrible. I came here to see him, to beg for your hand in marriage.

NGELIQUE: I am sorry, I cannot talk of marriage now. After this, I no longer wish to live in this world, and as a mark of respect to my father I will carry out his last wish, that I become a nun. I will kiss him now, to seal my final vow to him.

She stoops to kiss ARGAN.

RGAN: My sweet!

NGELIQUE: (*Terrified.*) Agh!

RGAN: (*Holding her.*) Don't be afraid sugar. I'm not dead.

NGELIQUE: Oh Father!

RGAN: There, there. My dearest, sweet daughter, my little baby girl. Oh I'm so pleased that I have seen your goodness.

NGELIQUE: Oh God! I'm so happy you're alive! Promise me one thing father, now that you live, if you do not want me to marry the man I love, this man, then please do not force another on me.

LEANTE: (*Kneeling.*) Sir! I beg of you, please listen to your daughter. Do you want to be remembered as a man who took up his sword to fight against love?

ERALDE: That's a good question.

INETTE: You can't ignore their passion!

RGAN: I'll agree to the marriage –

General positive noises, people start to kiss each other and celebrate until...

On condition that –

The celebrations halt.

– he trains to be a doctor.

JEANTE: (*Light-hearted.*) With pleasure. I would do anything! Even a dentist! Yes, a doctor! That can't be too hard.

ERALDE: (*To ARGAN.*) Why don't you become a doctor?

DINETTE: Good idea. No disease would dare attack a doctor.

ERALDE: What could be more convenient? In one body, you can be both the invalid and the healer. There'd always be a doctor on hand.

DINETTE: Cheaper too.

RGAN: You're laughing at me. I'm too old to be a student.

ERALDE: You don't need to study. You've had every disease in the book.

RGAN: That's true. But I can't speak Latin.

ERALDE: Talk jibberish. It doesn't matter. Simply putting on the white coat turns you into a expert, a genius, beyond questioning.

RGAN: You can't become a doctor just by putting on a white coat!

ERALDE: No, you'd need a beard as well.

DINETTE: A white coat and a beard, perfect.

ERALDE: You could be inaugurated straight away.

RGAN: You're mad!

ERALDE: I've arranged for friends of mine from the Medical Faculty to come here and perform the ceremony in your own living-room.

RGAN: For a large fee?

ERALDE: Obviously.

RGAN: I always thought I'd make a good doctor, and I've learnt a few things about the human body from being so seriously ill for so long. Let's do it.

ERALDE: (*To ARGAN.*) Go and get dressed in something more appropriate.

RGAN: And a wig!

ERALDE: Yes. Off you go!

ARGAN leaves.

INETTE: I'll get the students.

Exit TOINETTE.

JEANTE: What's the plan?

NGELIQUE: Do you really have friends in the faculty?

ERALDE: Calm down! The students from the faculty are rehearsing a burlesque about doctors. I thought it would be fun to perform it in front of him, to show him up. They're waiting outside.

NGELIQUE: Uncle! You've planned all this?!

ERALDE: It's just a bit of fun.

ANGELIQUE: I don't want to make fun of my father!

ERALDE: I would agree with you, if he was going to suffer, but I think this is helping, he's beginning to see the error of his ways.

JEANTE: Do you consent to this burlesque Angelique?

ANGELIQUE: I don't know. Alright! I can trust my uncle.

ERALDE: Excellent!

Enter a troupe of students dressed in white coats all with beards. This troupe can be made up from the actors who played BELINE, LOUISON, DIAFOIRERHOEA, his son THOMAS, Doctor PURGON, and BONNEFOI. TOINETTE is with them. They sing and dance.

IORUS: Scientissimi doctores,
Medicinae professores,
Chirurgiani et apothecari,
Non possum, docti confreri
In nostro docto corpore.
A nos bene conserve
Et totas dignas ramplire
Quam personas capabiles
Has placas honorabiles
In nostro docto corpore
Sententiarum facultatis
Et credo quod trovabitis
Salus, honor and bonum argentum
Atque grandum appetitum
In nostro docto corpore.

IORUS: ANUS SINGULAR!

DOCTOR (2): Anus, ane, anum, ani, ani, ano.

IORUS: ANUS PLURAL!

DOCTOR (2): Ani, ani, anos, anorum, anis, anis.

IORUS: Bene, bene respondere
Dignus, dignus, est entrare
In nostro docto corpore,
In nostro docto corpore.

Enter ARGAN still in wheelchair but out of his pyjamas.

IORUS: ENEMA SINGULAR!

DOCTOR (3): Enema, enema, enemam, enema, enema, enema.

IORUS: ENEMA PLURAL!

DOCTOR (3): Enema, enema, enemas, enemas, enemis, enemis.

IORUS: Bene, bene respondere
Dignus, dignus, est entrare
In nostro docto corpore,
In nostro docto corpore.

DOCTOR (1): Ubi est novissimus doctore?!

ERALDE: (*Pushing ARGAN forward.*) That's you!

RGAN: Hello.

IORUS: Bene, bene respondere
Dignus, dignus, est entrare
In nostro docto corpore,
In nostro docto corpore.

DOCTOR (1): Scientissimi doctores
Medicinae professores
Qui hic assemblati estis dominum.
Salut!

IORUS: Salut!

RGAN: Salve!

DOCTOR (1): Nos regardat sicut Deos
Et nostris ordainicus
In nostro clubbi blokey
Im Hippocratic oki cokey
Grandam vogam ubi sumus
Per totam terram vedemus
Sunt de nobis inflatuti
Patienti and the poorlyoli
Quam personas capabiles
Et totas diagnosis ramplire
Slowly fondly examinandum
Dignam credo leg off second opinium
Grandam dolorem capitat
I don't like the look of that
Super illas under the weather maladi
Fideles executores very handy coldy
In Nostro docto corpore!

IORUS: In nostro docto corpore!

DOCTOR (1): (*To ARGAN.*) Parlat Latin?

RGAN: I can decline bellum. War.

IORUS: Donare, donare, donare!

ARGAN: Blum, blum, blum,
Bli, blo, blo,
Bla, bla, bla
Blorum, blis, blis.

IORUS: Bene, bene respondere
Dignus, dignus, est entrare
In nostro docto corpore,
In nostro docto corpore.

One of the CHORUS steps forward and gives him a white coat. ARGAN dresses in it and stands out of his wheelchair. He straightens his back.

DOCTOR (1): How's yer verbs?

ARGAN: Amo, I love. Amo, amas, amat, amamus, amatis, amant.

IORUS: Bene, bene respondere
Dignus, dignus, est entrare
In nostro docto corpore,
In nostro docto corpore.

One of the CHORUS steps forward and gives him a black beard, another gives him a saw, another a knife, another a huge syringe.

DOCTOR (1): Vivat, vivat, vivat
Novus doctor bene parlat

IORUS: Vivat, vivat, vivat
Novus doctor bene parlat.

A patient is wheeled on.

DOCTOR (1): Primus Patienti!

Enter PATIENT, wailing.

IORUS: (*To ARGAN.*) Novissimus Doctore
Medico Proffission
Primus Patiente
Clysterium donare
Postea seignare
Ensuitta Purgare.

ARGAN: Me?

IORUS: Clysterium donare
Postea seignare
Ensuitta Purgare.

ARGAN: What's wrong with her?

During the next, four of the CHORUS spread out from head to foot and declare the illnesses they find in front of them. They take a line each.

IORUS: Athlete's Foot
Achilles Heel
Ankylosing Spondylitis
Nits!
Bunions
Bedwetting
Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia
Nits!
Corns
Cystitis
Cirrhosis of the liver
Nits!
Dementia
Depression

Dupuytren's Contrature
Nits!

IORUS: Clysterium donare
Postea seignare
Ensuita Purgare.

RGAN: But I don't know what I'm doing.

The patient holds out a hand which is stuffed with bank notes. ARGAN is handed a knife. During the next he cuts the woman's stomach open and starts pulling out the liver, pancreas, organs, bones etc. At the end of the operation the woman jumps off the stretcher and kisses ARGAN. Through the next ARGAN is struggling to keep up, and coughs intermittently.

IORUS: Vivat, vivat, vivat
a thousand times Vivat.

ARGAN is really struggling.

Bene, bene, respondere
Dignus, dignus est entrare
In nostro docto corpore
IN NOSTRO DOCTO CORPORE!

All the cast take a bow. Argan can barely stand. And a second bow, then all but Argan leave the stage. Argan kneels and coughs, he coughs up blood and spits. It's ugly. BERALDE / LA THORILLIÈRE enters.

LA THORILLIÈRE: (*To the wings.*) Curtain! Curtain! Molière's ill! Call his doctor! Molière's ill. Get his doctor now! Get the bloody curtain down!

ANGELIQUE / ARMANDE runs on with water. But ARGAN / MOLIERE is too far gone to be able to drink.

ARMANDE: Please drink! Here! (*To LA THORILLIÈRE.*) He was coughing blood at the end of Act Two.

LA THORILLIÈRE: It's his lungs.

Enter CHORUS (1).

CHORUS (1): What is it?

LA THORILLIÈRE: It's Molière. His lungs.

Enter CHORUS (2).

CHORUS (2): His doctor's not here.

LA THORILLIÈRE: Get another bloody doctor then!

Exit CHORUS (2).

ARMANDE: Drink my sweet, drink. It's me Armande. Drink.

LA THORILLIÈRE: (*To the audience.*) Molière's collapsed. We need a doctor. Is there a doctor in? (*Beat.*) Come on! We need a fucking doctor

To black.